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NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Patty Robarge, Lubrecht Experimental Forest facilities manager, (406) 244-5524.

UM'S LUBRECHT FOREST OFFERS INTERPRETIVE HIKING TRAILS

MISSOULA —

The University of Montana's Lubrecht Experimental Forest now offers three interpretive hiking trails for those wishing to learn more about western Montana's natural world. The forest, a 28,000-acre outdoor laboratory, is located 30 miles northwest of Missoula along Montana Highway 200.

"One purpose of this forest is educational outreach," said Patty Robarge, Lubrecht facilities manager. "These trails are very informative, and we've had a lot of positive feedback from people."

The forest has three self-guided hikes of varying lengths:

- The one-third-mile Forestry Walk describes forest dynamics, patterns and plant species. Part of the trail is handicapped accessible.

- The 1.5-mile Forest Ecology Trail familiarizes hikers with vegetation patterns and different Lubrecht species as it winds through a vibrant forest ecology. The hike has a steep grade and beautiful vistas.

- The 3.5-mile Forest Management Trail shows a variety of forest-related activities and their influence on vegetation patterns.

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All hikes are self-guided. Brochures describing each hike are located at each trailhead. Information in the brochures corresponds with numbered posts along each trail. Explorers on the trails may encounter dense Lodgepole forests, aspen groves, lichens, diseased trees, UM research projects, burn areas and more.

Once they have turned right off Highway 200, visitors to Lubrecht Forest should take the first left in the road and then the first right to reach the Castles Forestry Center parking lot. The Forest Ecology Trail begins in that lot. The Forestry Walk begins above the lot off the camp loop road. The Forest Management Trail starts a quarter mile farther along the camp loop road from "center parking" sign. Those who need further help should visit the forestry center.

The trails are open to the public through Labor Day. Those who want to try the trails at other times should make arrangements with Lubrecht managers.

For more information, call Lubrecht Experimental Forest at (406) 244-5524, e-mail lubrecht@forestry.umn.edu or visit the Web site at www.forestry.umn.edu/lubrecht.

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